



State of Connecticut

Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

18-20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Tel. (860) 240-8330
Fax (860) 240-0315

E-Mail: lprac@cga.ct.gov
Web Site: www.cga.ct.gov/lprac

Chairperson
Pablo Rivera
Vice-Chair
Sonia P. Ayala
Secretary
Maritza Tirú
Treasurer
Ed Rodríguez

Past Chair
Ivette Servera

Commissioners:
Ramón L. Arroyo
Carlos E. Candal, Esq.
Isaías Tomas Díaz, Esq.
Enrique Marciano, Sr.
Juan M. Pérez
Norma Rodríguez-Reyes

Acting Executive Director
Werner Oyanadel

**Special Projects
Coordinator/Grants Writer**
Lucy Goicoechea-Hernández

Senior Legislative Secretary
Clarisa Cardone

Testimony of Werner Oyanadel, Acting Executive Director
Task Force on Children in the Recession ~ Saturday, December 5, 2009
Legislative Office Building, Room 2C ~ 10:00 A.M. ~ Hartford, Connecticut

Good morning State Representative Karen Jarmoc (D-Enfield) and State Representative Diana Urban (D-Stonington/North Stonington) thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak about the impact of the recession on Latino children residing in Connecticut. My name is Werner Oyanadel, Acting Executive Director of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC).

Connecticut's total population according to the latest Census information is 3,494,851 out of which 391,405 are of Latino descent. Of the 827,101 children under the age of 18 living in Connecticut, 130,366 are of Latino/Hispanic descent and they make up 15.5% of the overall student population in Connecticut public schools. Furthermore, as it was reported by Connecticut Voices for Children – a non-partisan research-based public education and advocacy organization – “*There are dramatic differences in family structure and economic circumstances for these children as compared to white non-Hispanic children*”, that is the fact that Latino/Hispanic and African-American children are seven times more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts or the fact that 5 out of 10 Latino/Hispanic families live in married households compared to 8 out of 10 in white, non-Hispanic households. Meanwhile, the infant mortality rate in Connecticut was 1.6 times higher for Latino/Hispanic children than white non-Hispanic children and, probably most important for this task force to know, is the fact that the poverty rate for Latino children under the age of 18 for whom poverty status is determined by the U.S. Census is 30% – this is a very alarming statistic to the LPRAC considering that an additional 35,000 Connecticut children are expected to fall into poverty during the recession currently affecting the State of Connecticut.

The LPRAC subcontracted the Center for Research & Public Policy in 2007 to conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the current socio-economic condition of Latinos/Hispanics living in Connecticut and released its findings at the beginning of 2008. The overall findings of our research showed that there were a significant number of indicators that Connecticut Hispanic/Latinos were experiencing a declining quality of life and standard of living – information that was released before the recession began to intensify in December of 2007.

Now that we've been hit with the recession, it is clear that many of the working families that were living paycheck to paycheck before the recession began are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness, hunger and/or illness if unemployed or laid off. It is within this context that we urge this task force to act now so that we do not increase child poverty any further in Connecticut. We respectfully recommend that priority be given to keeping in place state benefits for immigrant families; the LPRAC also believes that the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) should strengthen state services that aid families experiencing financial crisis; we urge the state to do everything possible to maximize federal opportunities and stimulus dollars to aid the basic needs of children and families; and finally, we urge the CGA to allocate funds to non-profit agencies that provide job training for the unemployed, food/shelter to the homeless, health care coverage to the uninsured and maintain after-school programs for the youth. In the long run, the CGA should ensure that job creation reach unemployed Latinos and preserve homeownership in communities of color in order to help them achieve self-sufficiency.